



**STATE
EDITION**

Sponsored by:



Michigan Live

- Pick An Edition
- Forums+Chat
- Local
- News
- Sports
- Prep Sports
- Cams/Radio/TV
- Entertainment
- Business
- Travel+Living
- Marketplace
- Find Jobs,Cars, Homes + More!

About Michigan Live

Contact Us
Advertising
Search the Site
Work Here
User Agreement
Privacy Policy

© 2001 Michigan Live
All rights reserved.



NEWS

Great Lakes drilling ban inches forward

Thursday, November 1, 2001

**By Mike Magner
Washington Bureau**

WASHINGTON -- Congress is moving to impose a two-year federal ban on oil and gas drilling beneath the Great Lakes, setting up a likely legal battle with the state of Michigan over who controls the offshore energy resources.

The House, with bipartisan support, Wednesday gave final approval to the ban by including it in a \$24.6 billion funding bill for the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Senate was scheduled to pass the bill today and send it to President Bush, who is expected to sign it.

"This is a great victory not only for those of us who live near the Great Lakes, but for the entire country," said U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, a Michigan Democrat who authored the ban.

"Our waters are too important a resource to risk at the hands of those who would jeopardize their safety for financial gain." Stabenow said.

Drilling beneath the Great Lakes, even from the shore with directional drills angled underground to reach beneath the lake bottom, poses too many risks, said U.S. Rep. David Bonior, D-Mount Clemens, the ban's chief sponsor in the House.

"Just one quart of oil could contaminate 2 million gallons of drinking water," said Bonior, a Democratic candidate for governor next year.

Four Michigan Republicans -- Reps. Dave Camp of Midland, Vern Ehlers of Grand Rapids, Peter

MICHIGAN VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY

FREE
700 computer-related courses for students, staff, faculty & teachers

Click here to see if you're eligible:
www.mivu.org

Enroll now, enroll often!

INSIDE

News

- » [News Flash](#)
- » [Photo Gallery](#)
- » [Columns+Editorials](#)
- » [Election](#)
- » [Strange News](#)
- » [Capital News](#)
- » [Tax Center](#)
- » [Obituaries](#)
- » [Weather](#)



MARKETPLACE

- » [Auctions](#)
- » [Gift Guide](#)
- » [Weddings](#)
- » [Yellow Pages](#)
- » [Coupons](#)

E-MAIL UPDATES

Free daily news from your favorite MLive sections.

- » [Sign Up Now!](#)
- » [Unsubscribe](#)

Hoekstra of Holland and Fred Upton of St. Joseph -- also endorsed the drilling ban.

"When it comes to protecting the Great Lakes, it's a non-partisan issue," Hoekstra said, adding that those backing the ban will now push to protect the lakes from foreign species, toxic pollutants and water diversions. "This becomes a beachhead from which we will pass a whole series of initiatives."

But by enacting the ban, Congress put itself on a collision course with Michigan Gov. John Engler and the Republican-controlled Legislature, which decided this year to expand directional drilling from state shorelines.

Engler believes the federal ban infringes on the state's authority to manage its own resources, said his spokeswoman, Susan Shafer.

"We're going to look at this bill and consider all our options," she said. "It's an issue that needs to be debated in the state of Michigan."

Opponents of the bill in Congress, including Michigan Republicans Mike Rogers of Brighton and Nick Smith of Addison, shared Engler's concern that federal interference with drilling opens the door to other federal controls.

"The next step is the feds dictating where we send Great Lakes water," Shafer said. "There's no federal statute that controls oil and gas, it's always been done by the states and it should continue to be that way."

Slant drilling has been done for more than 20 years in Michigan with no environmental damage, she added.

"Directional drilling poses no dangerous, direct impact to the environment," she said. "We've definitely got it well under way."

Thirteen wells have been angled below the lakes from onshore rigs in Michigan since 1979; platform drilling from offshore rigs is banned in state waters. Seven of the so-called slant drills are still active, including five in Manistee County and two in Bay County.

New wells were temporarily banned by the state in 1997, but Engler lifted the moratorium this year to

help ease a growing energy crisis. The Michigan Natural Resources Commission concurred Sept. 14 by voting 6-1 to offer new leases for directional drilling, and the state Senate upheld the decision in a 22-13 vote Sept. 20.

"No matter what the Natural Resources Commission in Michigan had decided, this will stop that," insisted Stabenow. She added that the two-year federal ban probably will be made permanent by whoever succeeds Engler, who must leave office at the end of 2002.

State geologists say there may be enough oil and gas beneath lakes Michigan, Huron and Erie to support up to 30 new wells.

Wells drilled in Michigan since 1979 have produced nearly a half million barrels of oil and 18 billion cubic feet of gas, enough to fuel 2,200 cars and heat 19,000 homes each year, the state say. The wells also have produced an average of \$4 million a year in state revenues since 1996.

[Send this page to a friend](#)



Copyright 2001 Michigan Live Inc.

Michigan Live is a Registered Trademark of Advance Internet, Inc.